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Title: Need to withdraw the increased rentals on salt lands and make the Central Advisory Board for salt functional in the interest of small salt manufacturers.

SHRI S.S. RAMASUBBU (TIRUNELVELI): India occupies third position in the production of salt after China and USA. Presently we are producing 220 lakh tonnes of salt which stood at 19 lakh tonnes at the time of Independence. Countrywide about 6.09 lakh acres of land are under salt production and 11,800 manufacturers are in this field. Among them, small manufacturers who are having less than 10 acres are 87.6%. In our country, we are consuming 59 lakh tonnes of salt directly, 107 lakh tonnes are used for industrial purposes and 35 lakh tonnes are exported.

Besides Gujarat, Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh are producing huge quantities of salt. Though the Union Government does not impose any tax on salt production, the producers are shocked by the issue of recent circular by the Union Government. It states that i) ground rent increased to Rs. 120 per acre per annum from Rs. 5. ii) Assignment Fee or Lease Rent which was at Rs.10 per tonne is increased to Rs. 100. Further, the Government also sought to collect the increased ground rent in lumpsum with retrospective effect from January 2013. Another move of the Government is to tender out salt pan lands after the expiry of lease period. The manufacturers have been taking lease lands belonging to the Centre. This will greatly affect the small land holders as they have created infrastructure including wells, scrapping pans, brine reservoirs and evaporation pits, roads, buildings and provision of electricity on the lands and they will end up losing their investments. Assignment Fee is to be revised every three years. However, there is no guarantee for salt production because it depends on the weather. Before implementing this proposal, manufacturers were not consulted. Moreover, the Central Advisory Board for Salt has not been functioning for over 15 years and the manufacturers have no forum to represent their genuine grievances. In our country, salt production stood at 100 tonnes only whereas experts suggest that it can be raised to 300 tonnes. Government should focus its attention to increase the acreage of salt production thereby raise the revenue *instead* of levying steep hike in Ground Rent, Assignment Fee, etc.

I shall, therefore, humbly urge upon the Union Government to take necessary steps for immediate roll back of increased rentals on salt lands and to make functional the Central Advisory Board for Salt in order to render justice to the small salt manufactures so as to make availability of salt to the consumers at affordable price.